

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle comprising:

(a) a first mirror element having a reflective surface adapted to be pivotally supported on said vehicle;

(b) a second mirror element having a reflective surface, proximate the first, adapted to be pivotally supported on said vehicle;

(c) a first positioning device for selectively positioning said first and second mirror elements, in tandem, to provide the vehicle operator a planer view, directly rearward of the vehicle, from both said elements; and,

(d) a second positioning device, which may be the same as the first, for selectively positioning said second mirror element in a generally downwardly, tilted position to provide the operator a downward view of the area adjacent the lower side of the vehicle from said second element during backing.

2. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 1 wherein said second positioning device returns said second mirror element to its original position to provide the vehicle operator a planer view, directly rearward of the vehicle, from both said elements when the vehicle resumes normal operation.

3. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 1, wherein said second positioning device is actuated in response to the vehicle being placed in reverse gear.

4. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 3 wherein said second positioning device returns said second mirror element to its original position to provide the vehicle operator a planer view, directly rearward of the vehicle, from both said elements when the vehicle is removed from reverse gear.

5. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 1 wherein a control is responsive to the vehicle reverse gear selector being placed in reverse gear, which causes said second positioning device to position the second mirror element to a downwardly tilted position.
6. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 5 wherein said second positioning device returns said second mirror element from a downwardly tilted position to its previous position when the reverse gear selector is removed from the reverse gear position.
7. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 1 wherein said the first and second mirror element abut one another so that the mirror elements provide a reflective surface segmented along one of their horizontal common sides.
8. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 7 wherein, said first and second elements are hinged along their common side.
9. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 1 wherein said the two elements are pivotally housed in a single mirror housing which is adapted to be supported on said vehicle.
10. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 1 wherein said first and second mirror elements comprise two spaced apart, stacked reflective surfaces, configured such that both mirror elements are able to be remotely positioned, in tandem, for rearward viewing while the vehicle is in other than in reverse, but configured such that when the vehicle is placed in reverse, the lower mirror element, in the tandem arrangement, is able of being automatically focused downward.
11. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 10 wherein said lower mirror element is able to be returned to its original position for rearward viewing when said vehicle is removed from reverse gear.

12. An exterior rearview mirror system to be supported on a vehicle comprising:
- first and second mirror elements, configured such that both mirror elements are able to be remotely positioned, in tandem, for rearward viewing while the vehicle is not in reverse gear, but configured such that when the vehicle is placed in reverse gear, the lower mirror element, in the tandem arrangement, is able of being automatically focused downward.
13. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 12 wherein said lower mirror element is able to be returned to its original position for rearward viewing when said vehicle is removed from reverse gear.
14. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 12 wherein said first and second elements comprise two spaced apart, stacked mirror elements.
15. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 12 wherein said the first and second mirror elements abut one another so that the mirror elements provide a reflective surface segmented along one of their horizontal common sides.
16. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 15 wherein, said first and second mirror elements are hinged along their segmented common side.
17. The exterior rearview mirror system for a vehicle of claim 12 wherein said first and second mirror elements are pivotally housed in a single mirror housing which is adapted to be supported on said vehicle.
18. An automatically positionable mirror assembly for vehicles comprising:
- (a) a mirror housing adapted to be supported on said vehicle;
 - (b) a segmented mirror being movably supported by said mirror housing comprising a first mirror segment movably supported within said housing and a second mirror segment, being movably supported within said housing, independently of said first mirror segment, wherein said first and second mirror segments are adjustable in concert to provide a rearward view as if they

were a single reflective element, and, wherein said second mirror segment is positionable, relative said first mirror segment, at a first preselected position which provides a rearward view with said first mirror segment as if they were a single reflective element and a second preselected position which provides a downward view of the area adjacent the lower side of said vehicle;

(c) a motorized positioning device operatively connected to said second mirror segment for moving said second mirror segment between said first preselected position and said second preselected position; and,

(d) a control circuit interconnected between said motorized positioning device and an energy source such that upon placing the vehicle in reverse gear said motorized positioning device causes movement of the second mirror segment from said first preselected position to said second preselected position.

19. The automatically positionable mirror assembly for vehicles of claim 18, wherein said control circuit, upon removing said vehicle from reverse gear, causes said motorized positioning device to move the second mirror segment from said second preselected position to said first preselected position.

20. A method for providing a vehicle operator a simultaneous, rearward view and downward view along the side of the vehicle, from a segmented exterior rearview mirror assembly while backing comprising the steps of:

(a) selectively positioning a first and second mirror segment, each independently pivotally supported on said vehicle, to provide the vehicle operator a planer view directly rearward of the vehicle from both said elements; and,

(b) selectively positioning the second mirror element in a generally downwardly, tilted position to provide the operator a downward view of the area adjacent the lower side of the vehicle from the second element during backing.

21. The method of claim 20 comprising the further step of selectively re-positioning the second mirror element to its first position such that the vehicle operator is provided a planer view directly rearward of the vehicle from both said elements upon completion of backing.

22. An automatic exterior rearview mirror assembly to facilitate backing a motor vehicle comprising:

- (a) a mirror housing adapted to be supported on the automotive vehicle;
- (b) at least one first mirror element adapted to be pivotally supported on said mirror housing;
- (b) at least one second mirror element, proximate the first, pivotally supported on said mirror housing;
- (c) at least one positioning device, remotely controlled,
 - (i) for selectively positioning said at one first and the at least one second mirror elements, in tandem, to provide the vehicle driver a view directly rearward of the vehicle from both said elements when the vehicle is not in reverse gear;
 - (ii) for selectively positioning said at least one second mirror element in a generally downwardly, tilted position to provide the driver a downward view of the area, adjacent the side of the vehicle from said second element when the vehicle is in reverse gear; and,
 - (iii) for selectively returning said at least one second mirror element to its original position to provide the vehicle operator a planer view, directly rearward of the vehicle, from both said elements when said when the vehicle is removed from reverse gear.